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**Philosophy of Education**

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*“What a teacher is, is more important than what she teaches” Karl A. Menniger*

The influences in my life that have made me who I am are just as important as the educational understanding that has shaped my teaching philosophy. As a future teacher I know that I am a passionate, fun, and hardworking individual. I put my students first when teaching, and students are the center of my pedagogy. I desire student collaboration, believe in teaching to the whole student, and know that all students have the power to succeed. These beliefs make up who I am as a teacher and give me the classroom characteristics to inspire students and instill personal growth. When the bell rings at the end of the day, my interactions are more important than the material being taught, as helping students find themselves is one of my utmost goals. Who I am, makes me the teacher I am, and as you will see, I feel that my teaching pedagogy will render my classroom successful no matter the topic area.

In terms of teaching, there are many things I desire to teach that do not coincide with my concentration area. Although my concentration is Social Studies, I desire to integrate my curriculum to include elements of all other subjects. I love the interdisciplinary approach, and aim to incorporate all subjects into my lessons. Since everything is interconnected in life, I find it important to show that all subjects are connected as well. Therefore, by teaching interdisciplinary, I will be able to help my students see how all subject areas are related and therefore promote greater success in their learning. For my content area, I strive to teach students about the over-arching concepts and big ideas in history. Students in my classroom will not be forced to memorize dates. Rather, they will have a greater understanding of why and how past/present historical events have developed. I believe that it is key to understand events through personal accounts, music, video, reading, art, and other forms of expression. My students will also look at material from multiple lenses. They will learn about events from different and opposing perspectives, such as through the eyes of females, the LGBTQ community, children, African Americans, class, and varying religions, to give them a greater understanding. My classroom will also promote social justice issues and strive to understand the constraints placed on others in society. Due to the fact that I

want students to understand the past against the back drop of the present, I will relate past events to present ones, allowing for heightened engagement.

Content aside, I have three other things I would like to teach my students: the qualities of tolerance, positivity, and perseverance. My main goal is to teach students how to be tolerant of those different than them. To do this, I will teach them about other cultures, people, and areas, and expose them to diverse experiences. This will expand their view on culture norms. In doing so, students can have greater respect for those around them. I also hope to impart positivity on my students through my interactions. At the secondary age group it is important to be able to look at things with a positive mindset. Not only does it help to increase the happiness of students, but it also reduces depression like symptoms. Mental health is extremely important for young adolescents as they are trying to grow and develop their identity. Having a positive mindset allows for students to be more resilient when troubling or stressful events occur. Lastly, I want to teach my students the power of perseverance. To do so, I will show them that it is okay to make mistakes and struggle. I will foster a classroom environment that makes mistakes feel like a way to the final product. In teaching them how to keep going, students will feel powerful in their ability to do high quality work.

A more important aspect than what one will teach, is how one will teach. In my classroom I will teach using cooperative learning groups, student centered activities, adhere to the eight forms of intelligence, and also teach to all types of learners. Cooperative learning groups will be at the center of my teaching. I feel as though valuable learning takes place when students are able to work and discuss key ideas with others. Such groupings make the material come to life in ways that cannot always be done in solace, and help students form bonds with their classmates. Due to these reasons, I aim to group students in activities to foster a cooperative and collaborative classroom, and to help them eternalize information. I also believe strongly in student-centered learning. Student-centered learning is extremely valuable, as it expands the minds of students, engages them in the learning process, and allows them to learn on their own. Allowing students to learn through each other, self-inquiry, and internal understanding is powerful. I believe that my role as an educator is to guide them through this process and assist them in uncovering the reality of our world. To do this I will run an activity based classroom, not one that centers around the educator. In order to encompass all types of learners, I will teach to the eight intelligences.

This will allow for heightened engagement in my lessons, as they adhere to many students' needs. I believe that all students are capable of learning, and have something to learn, therefore I will teach to all forms of learners. My students and classroom will be inclusive.

I see myself as an educator in a close learning community, as a collaborative teacher, either teaching on a team, in conjunction with other educators, or co-teaching. This will grant me great levels of support and success in my teaching environment. Lastly, many of my favorite teachers were people who were passionate about what they were teaching. This not only heightened my interest, but also heightened my motivation in class. Such passionate and enthusiastic educators are what made me excited to learn, I would like to do this for my students as well. Due to this, I see myself teaching with an enthusiastic, passionate, and energetic persona. Even if I find myself not as interested in the curriculum, I will find something to be passionate about within it.

All ages have positive attributes that make me want to teach. For example, I love the energy of the students at the middle school level, and the ability you have to create goofy, fun, and unique activities. At the high school level, I love the chance you have to inspire students, help them determine their futures and connect with them on a personal level. I can especially see myself at the ninth and tenth grade level. These students share some of the energy seen in middle school, but are also at a critical age where they can be inspired and encouraged by educators. I think the most important thing, regarding who I will teach, is that I want to teach students who struggle with school. I want to teach students who need modifications, multiple representations, or to go at their own pace. When these students understand something, or make progress, it is a special feeling. I want to help students who don't believe in themselves academically, believe in themselves. I think that I have the caring persona to help struggling students succeed in the classroom, and a creative mind to keep them engaged in the learning process.

No matter who I teach, my ultimate goal as a teacher is to teach to the whole child. I believe that it is important not just to teach to the minds of students, but also to teach to their persona, character, and desires. Pestalozzi believes that children are made up of "head, heart, hand, body, feelings, and intellect" therefore it is necessary to educate the whole child. I agree with his philosophy, as educators should teach students how to be thinkers, care for one another, be good citizens, and create. Teaching does not end with content, it only begins. Students have emotional, moral, and physical qualities. I desire to teach to all of

these. I want students to leave my classroom feeling as though they are comfortable with their identity and themselves. Such feelings come from creating a positive classroom environment, establishing genuine care for all students, and teaching for humanity. I want to teach young, struggling minds, and show them all that they are capable of. This is where I believe I can flourish as an educator.

My philosophy on education will impact my classroom in numerous ways, as it will be an extension of my beliefs. Physically, my classroom will be organized into tables or groups of desks for students to work at. Since I hold cooperative learning, and student-based education at a high, the set-up of my classroom will seek to enforce this. At other times, I can see my classroom seating in a horseshoe or circle. This will promote class discussions and conversations among students. Since I believe that students can also be successful in nontraditional seating, I also plan to have a corner of the room dedicated to bean-bag chairs and warm lighting. This will give students a comfortable place to do their work, and seating that allows them to move around more. For students who have trouble focussing, this will be extremely helpful. In addition, because I believe that students have enough to worry about, I will provide all my students with a folder for their papers and work in my class. This will allow students to keep track of their things better, and come to class better prepared. I also plan to have a closet that has extra food, school supplies, and hygiene items for my students. This will help those who are living in poverty be more comfortable at school.

In terms of lesson planning, my educational philosophy promotes the student-centered learning and activities seen in constructivism. I envision the main goal of my classroom as one that helps students discover answers. Therefore, when creating lessons, I plan to be a coach. I want students to be finders of their own information, synthesizers, and analyzers. My plan for lessons is to guide them to their own conclusions and findings, as when they uncover it on their own they learn more. When designing lessons, and envisioning my future classroom, I picture a place with a lot of hands-on activities. I strongly desire to reach all students in their learning preferences, and get them engaged in the material. Activities are the best way to teach to all types of learners, and spark interest. This is part of what makes me a constructivist.

I recognize that not all students are intrinsically motivated by school. Therefore, I plan to help motivate my students by giving them voice and choice, respect, encouragement, and by relating the

information to themselves and the present. As someone who identifies strongly with the student-centered aspects of constructivism and humanism, to motivate students, I envision my classroom having a lot of choice and voice. By giving students a say in how class is run, a choice in their learning, and the respect that they deserve, I can picture my classroom operating in a respectful and tolerant manner. The increase in choice also helps motivate students, as they are given avenues to pursue learning that interests them. Another way I plan to motivate students is by relating the content to themselves. This is extremely important when learning anything that is difficult to connect with. By helping students connect learning to their lives, it becomes engrained and engaging. The incorporation of past content to present day motivates students as it gives them a context for their learning. Connecting the bridge between past and present also gives students the opportunity to become passionate about current issues.

To further motivate students, I plan to encourage them in all they do. In celebrating the small victories, and pushing them forward even when they hit failure, I will help them intrinsically motivate themselves. Positive feedback, constructive comments, and a strong relationship will go far in my classroom. If I need to motivate students behaviorally, I have two options in mind. The first option is to have a “punch-in” chart where students put their name cards on the chart as they enter class. If they are doing something that is inappropriate, I will remove their name and politely inform them why. If they change their behavior, their name can get put back up on the board and get thrown into an end of the week drawing for a treat or school supply. This will help to reinforce and motivate positive behaviors in the classroom. If this does not work, I will institute Shorey Bucks; fake money that can be used to purchase things in the classroom. This money will be given to students exhibiting proper classroom behavior or following the SOP. Although extrinsic motivation does not fully coincide with my teaching style, I feel that at the middle school level some of these motivators are necessary. Through a combination of humanist, constructionist, and personal motivators, I plan to help students succeed and attain greater success in school.

Assessment in my classroom will take a nontraditional route. Formative assessment will be used regularly and informally, while all summative assessments will not be high-stakes. If I were to use quizzes in my classroom they would be used as a tool for student and teacher evaluation/reflection. Tests would be used only to ensure that basics are understood. To represent all types of learners, I would require all of

my tests to include pictures, lyrics, diagrams, organizers, various forms of questions, spoken components and study guides. Although I have plans for how to use tests and quizzes, I do not plan on using them often. I am a firm believer in project-based-learning. PBL allows for students to apply the learning to real-life contexts and also gives students multiple forms of representing their knowledge. If I assign projects students will get in-class work time, as I understand they might not have the resources out of school to do their work. The projects used in my classroom will encourage students to be creative and express their strengths. If essays are used for assessment, they will be to show higher order thinking/deep analysis and students will get to choose their topics within the greater theme. In order to assess students I must first provide workshops to scaffold the process of the project, this will increase student success. For projects and essays I will be sure to provide a rubric or checklist. In addition, I will give students the option for peer/self/teacher feedback prior to when projects are due, and they will always have the option to redo any of the work.

The climate of my classroom will coincide with that of a constructivist, as students will be understanding and empathetic to one another, will welcome diversity, share their own ideas, and listen to others. This classroom climate is critical for the information I desire to teach. I would like to have the conversations about race, religion, classism, and gender in my classroom. However, to do so, I need to develop a climate like the one I mentioned above. I believe that once the class climate is empathetic, understanding, and caring, students can tap into their ultimate potential as critical thinkers. In addition, this will make my classroom a safe place for all different types of voices. In honoring the voices of all my students, relationships can take root, and a democratic classroom can be established. As an educator that promotes a democratic classroom, I also aim for a strong relationship with my students. I believe that students should have a say in how the classroom is run. I envision a mutual respect between myself and my students, and my students with one another. A classroom climate that promotes all voices, is understanding and empathetic, is safe for the expression of ideas and opinions, and allows one to push themselves is the climate I aim to create.

Depending on where I teach the main focus of my student's learning will be the learning objectives or standards. These will drive my curriculum and instruction, however they will not dictate how I teach. My teaching will make the learning experience associated with the standards engaging. As an

educator in a new and informative age, I look forward to integrating technology into my classroom. I believe strongly in the informational age, and enjoy the benefits it brings to students. Technology allows students the opportunity to pinpoint their interests, take innovative risks, and work on skills for the modern age. I plan to integrate technology through the creation of websites, presentations, movies, music videos, podcasts, songs, prezis, comics, scavenger hunts, games, pamphlets, online posters, plays, news casts, and commercials. In my daily teaching I also plan to use technology to heighten student engagement. Technological instruction has the power to transform a student and render them successful. It enhances the success of students who struggle both behaviorally and academically, and allows the instruction to be accessible for all types of learners. In order to effectively teach secondary level students, I will continue to gain more knowledge on the expansion of current technological literacies to heighten student engagement, create positive learning experiences, and provide a greater breadth of instruction. In a world that is rapidly advancing, it is essential to be an educator who is aware of the power technology has. Together, both students and teachers can teach each other new technologies to promote higher order thinking, and heighten student interest with content. Technology integration lends itself to student-centered instruction, and the democratic environment I aspire to have in my classroom.

As a secondary educator, I believe that a role of mine is to help students find their passion or niche. To do this, they need positive relationships with educators, choice in their learning, and a safe community. I feel drawn to the humanism classification as it represents the idea of developing students as people. Although one's person is always changing, helping students develop their identity and helping them be comfortable with who they are is critical for educators. In my classroom I want students to feel like they can be themselves, know that I am a resource if they need one, and to help students reach their goals. I also want to take their feedback and put it to use. In addition, I aim to never ask students to be a spokesperson for their race, religion, gender, sexual orientation or area of origin. I feel that this puts students in an uncomfortable position, and is simply wrong to do. Outside of the classroom, I also aim to be a leader in the school. I see myself leading professional development sessions, educating my fellow peers on poverty issues, and potentially becoming a diversity coach. I plan to continue my education and stay current with popular technologies, programs, and educational pedagogies. By remaining a life-long learner, I will become a leader in my school and classroom.

Since coming to UMF, I have learned that I am both a constructionist and humanist. There are also three philosophers in which I connect most strongly with, Pestalozzi, John Dewey and Mary McLeod Bethune. Pestalozzi's commitment to providing an education for underprivileged students is an issue I feel passionate about. I believe that all children deserve an education, and that education can mean the difference in helping someone out of poverty. He also believed that student-teacher relationships should be loving and caring, "where the teacher respects the child and bases discipline on love.". To do this I will have a basis of respect and care for all students who walk into my classroom. Dewey's democratic classroom model also speaks to my pedagogy. He believed in providing students with choices and giving them opportunities to have meaningful interactions with the world. Applying the learning to real-world problems, outside realms, and field experience is key for student understanding. It is here where students can see why education is necessary. Dewey also believed that education should not be a preparation for life, but a way of living. I agree with this, as I think the purpose of schools is to teach students how to enter the world and be life-long learners. Lastly, words spoken by Mary McLeod Bethune connect to my beliefs in teaching. She said, "there is no such thing as Negro education-only education. I want my people to prepare themselves bravely for life, not because they are Negroes, but because they are human beings". I feel that education should not have any limitations based on who you are or what you believe. Education should be for everyone, and contain equal opportunities for students. To help all students have equal opportunities, and to make sure that all students can leave school feeling prepared for life, are the strongholds of the teaching profession. Education is education, and no matter what life throws at our students, teachers need to make sure all students have the tools to be successful in whatever way they desire.

There have been many influences in my life that have contributed to my teaching philosophy aside from my time in the college classroom. When I came to college and had the opportunity to begin my teaching career, through practicum, I was able to understand the type of educator I desired to be. Originally I had thought that I wanted to be an honors or AP teacher, however, when placed in that environment I quickly realized it wasn't for me. I fell in love with struggling students. They challenge my teaching to be at its best, and require me to make learning fun. I enjoy pushing myself to meet the needs of all students, not just those who excel in school. My placement also made me realize I want my



classroom to be a place filled with creative activities and energy. I want to encourage conversation and movement in my students. Practicum proved a great realization as to the type of teacher I wanted to be. In accordance with practicum, student teaching was also another eye-opening experience. Student teaching influenced me in classroom management and helped me realize the teaching environment I wanted to be a part of. I learned that I want to be a caring educator when I address students for their behavior. Rather than yell or raise my voice, I would much rather have a conversation with my student that shows I care about them. I have found that these go much further with students than the discipline I grew up with in school. Through student teaching I also realized that I love teaching on a team of educators. With the right colleagues I feel that this environment is one that I can flourish in. I have found that team teaching provides great support in the educational process, and it allows you to better educate all students. By being on a team, educators are able to collaborate, teach interdisciplinary, and work together to target common problems. I absolutely loved this experience and can only dream of being part of a similar one when I become a teacher. Together, both practicum and student teaching have positively influenced my teaching philosophy.

There have also been many educational experiences that have influenced my teaching philosophy. The first, and most prominent in terms of what I want to teach, was from my methods course. The pivotal point of study that blossomed my attraction for cultural understanding was in my methods course. One day, on the whiteboard, was a Wordle. This Wordle depicted our races, genders, religions, ethnicities, preferred language, and socio-economic status of our classmates. The largest words were 'white', 'Christian' and 'English'. This Wordle depicts the culture I live in, and the only culture I've ever been a part of. Since the start of my Multicultural Education course, my cultural self-awareness has strengthened. This has propelled me to seek out graduate programs that allow me to develop pedagogy to teach diverse populations and teach diversely to non-diverse populations. I feel that in order to understand the world, students need to respect, understand, and tolerate other cultures and identities. The way we can change the upcoming generation's outlook to welcome diversity is by exposing young minds to various cultures, beliefs, and social constructs. This is what I want my life's work to be. I desire to be a welcoming teacher, with a classroom that incorporates diversity and tolerance. This is how my methods course has influenced my educational philosophy.

In addition, my ever increasing knowledge on class and poverty has most recently influenced my educational philosophy. In learning about poverty I have learned how to have a classroom that can teach to students of all different backgrounds. I now understand how to reach out to students in poverty, and also how to reach out to their families. I know that my students living in poverty need extra classroom resources and help with language. I realize that there is a strong need to advocate for students living in poverty for college courses and the gifted and talented program. I also know that interrupting is a sign of effective contribution, and that I must teach all of my students how to properly express emotion. Learning about poverty has changed my view on education, and has made me realize the power I have to help students break out of poverty. As an educator I can be a mentor for a student, an advocate, and a resource. I can teach them the importance of education, and therefore help them pull out of poverty's trenches. It is through such education where I have developed greater tools on how to teach effectively and to all of my students. Such information has impacted my heart and soul in so many ways. I know that it will forever impact my view on students in poverty, and how I teach them as well.

As I encounter the educational realm we are currently in, there's lots of debate on the role of schools and how students should be taught. Two modern issues; high-stakes testings and proficiency based education I feel strongly about. High-stakes testing has no role in the school system. As someone who believes in educating the whole child, high pressure tests get in the way of this. Preparation for these tests takes time away from teaching students about valuable and meaningful topics as well. It also takes away the fun in education by strongly promoting achievement. No matter where learning is at, it should be fun and relevant. High-stakes testing does not support the learning styles of all students either. Since it does not render students successful who have other methods of intelligence, it does not coincide with my teaching philosophy.

Proficiency based education is another current issue, and one that I personally like. This model of education supports student understanding. Rather than having their learning end with an assignment, students are able to continue bettering themselves on all standards. In addition, grading in reference to standards reflects directly what students know and how much they know. PBE is student centered grading and education. My pedagogy complies with this method of education, as it centers around the knowledge of the student. It helps render greater success in students, as they are able to re-submit assignments to

show higher levels of proficiency. In addition, they are also assessed for their knowledge and not on other contributing factors such as effort, or whether the assignment was in on time. This allows for greater accuracy in the grading system and a better understanding of what students actually know. Therefore, for the reasons listed above, I feel that standards based curricula is a positive ideal that renders more students successful, and allows for a more accurate representation of student growth.

As a new teacher I will contribute my student-centered enthusiasm and passion to whichever school I'm in. My desire to put students first, and ability to be an educational coach will heighten the learning in my classroom. My belief in all learners will also positively impact the district I teach in, as I will use strategies that give all students the ability to learn. By teaching to all intelligences, learning styles and abilities, all students will have the ability for academic success in my classroom. This will positively impact the district as it shows my belief in students, and desire to help them succeed. My educational belief in student-centered and experiential learning will also positively impact where I teach. In allowing students to uncover and investigate answers on their own, I will be allowing them to connect with the learning. This will further ingrain the information and make it accessible. My adherence to voice and choice in my classroom will also impact the school I'm in, as students will feel as though they are in charge of their learning. This will empower my students through education, and make learning more desirable. Lastly, the use of experiential learning in my classroom will help students connect with the material. With this pedagogy, students who leave my classroom will be able to apply what they learned to the world around them and see relevance in education.

Beyond that, I also want to make a difference in the educational world. After attaining my master's degree I aim to have practical knowledge in the areas of diversity, urban studies, and multiculturalism. Since I feel as though all school curriculums should reflect local and global diversity, I desire to take my understanding and show other educators how to teach diversely to both diverse and non-diverse populations. Through my role as a teacher, and an educational leader in diversity, I aim to heighten the levels of social and racial tolerance for students in both urban and rural areas. This coincides with my desire for a tolerant and accepting classroom environment, and my desire to teach to the whole child.

What a teacher is, and what they represent, is more important than the content they are teaching. As an aspiring educator, I represent a student-centered classroom, an inclusive learning environment, voice and choice, the education of the whole child, positive intervention, collaborative learning, interdisciplinary studies and much more. My beliefs on all of these factors, and my experiences thus far in education, have contributed to my personal teaching philosophy. This philosophy will guide me through my first years of teaching, and will constantly be in flux. After four years of learning who I am as a future educator, I am excited to see who I will be as an educator in the next four years.